



Pertussis in Schools

Suspect pertussis in school?

If you become aware of a suspected or confirmed case of pertussis in a child or staff member in your school, be sure to notify public health officials as soon as possible.

Public health investigators will work with you and the patient (or parent/guardian) to address questions and concerns, plan appropriate notifications, and implement prevention and control measures, as needed.

Action steps for schools

- Be aware of symptoms and consider pertussis in any student or staff member who has a cough lasting more than two weeks or a severe cough that occurs in sudden, uncontrollable bursts, especially if followed by vomiting.
- Encourage an evaluation by a health care provider if you suspect a student or staff person may have pertussis.

When should students with pertussis be excluded from school?

- Exclude students from school only if necessary. Guidance on school exclusion is available here: <http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/SiteAssets/Pages/Pertussis/PertussisSchoolExclusion.pdf>

Should we ever close school due to pertussis?

No. SOE does not recommend closing schools due to outbreaks of pertussis. There is no evidence that it prevents the spread of disease, as students may congregate in other settings.

What to expect when a case of pertussis is confirmed in your school:

Public health will collaborate with the student's family or affected staff member and you to:

- **Identify close contacts of the case.**
Public health prevention and control measures focus on close contacts. Pertussis spreads by droplets coughed into the air. In general persons are considered close contacts if they:
 - Are within three feet of someone with pertussis for at least 10 hours a week, or
 - Have direct face-to-face contact with someone with pertussis.
- **Inform others in your school and community about pertussis** -- especially if pertussis in the school generates a lot of questions and concerns or if a cluster or outbreak of cases occurs. Public health will also notify the medical community.
- **Promote Tdap vaccine** for adolescents and adults, including school staff, teachers and coaches, particularly in the event of an outbreak.
- **Remind parents** about the importance of keeping their younger children up-to-date on the DTaP series.

If you have questions or concerns:

Contact the Alaska Section of Epidemiology at: 907-269-8000 or see:

<http://dhss.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/id/Pages/dod/pertussis/pertussis.aspx>

Fact sheet adapted from Minnesota Department of Health <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/idepc/diseases/pertussis/index.html>